

Developing a Media Outreach Plan

A media outreach plan can raise awareness and help generate television, print, and other coverage of your anniversary activities. An effective plan can also generate interest in your program beyond the anniversary, by helping to cultivate relationships with local television, radio, and print media outlets and reporters. The tips in this section will help you get started.

1. Develop a timeline.

The timing of your effort depends in large part on the results you want to achieve. If you're depending on the media to help recruit volunteers for your event, you should start your media campaign as much as four to six weeks in advance. However, if you're simply asking a reporter to cover the event itself, three to four day's notice is usually sufficient.

The best way to determine your timeline is to work backwards from the date of your event. Consider the materials you'll need, check with media outlets to find out their specific deadlines, and determine how much time you and your planning team needs to prepare materials. Below is a suggested timeline to guide your efforts.

Two Months Prior to Activities	Two Weeks Prior to Activities	10 Days Prior to Activities	One Week Prior to Activities	Three or Four Days Prior to Activities	Day of The Event
Take time to develop a press list, determine press lead times and deadlines, and develop and customize your outreach materials (advisory, press release, op-ed, etc.)	Send drop-in article to local community newspapers and relevant Web sites. Send PSA reader copy to local TV and radio stations Send your community calendar listing to the community calendar sections at local daily and weekly papers	Send an opinion editorial (Op-Ed) to the editorial page editor at your local newspaper.	If Op-Ed is unsuccessful, send a Letter to the Editor.	Fax a media advisory to the media.	Fax a press release to the media.

***Samples of the materials listed above can be found in the *Working with the Media* section of this toolkit.**

2. Compile a media contact list.

If you don't already have a list of reporters, editors, columnists, and producers who have covered or might be interested in the Corporation and its programs, you'll want to create one as soon as possible. Depending on the extent of your outreach efforts, your media list can include local and regional newspapers and magazines; local television, cable and radio stations; wire services such as

Associated Press and Reuters; and special-interest media such as ethnic publications, college and community newspapers, church bulletins, and corporate and community newsletters.

Most libraries have media directories that you can use; your state service commission also can be helpful. Keep up with your local TV and newspaper coverage to identify reporters who cover social and community issues, or columnists who might be interested in your efforts.

3. Develop your pitch and prepare materials to support your outreach.

What is your news hook? What will convince the media that your story is newsworthy, timely, and interesting? The 10th anniversary of the Corporation is a news hook that some media outlets may consider newsworthy in and of itself. For other outlets, you may need to supplement your pitch with the opportunity to interview a local business leader who has been particularly involved in your organization. You may also want to provide a compelling volunteer story or a description of a particularly successful service project. It is up to you to package your event in a way that will attract media attention and highlight the anniversary. Use the anniversary message, sample talking points, and the details of your activity to craft your story.

Once you have a succinct message or “pitch”, prepare a media advisory, press release, and op-ed or letter to the editor that reinforces your message. These are standard tools for communicating with the media and will help generate interest in your anniversary activity. Sample materials are included in this toolkit.

- **Media Advisory** – A media advisory should be short and specific – including details on who, what, when, where and why of the event, as well as contact information. The advisory should be faxed to everyone on your media contact list three or four days prior to your activity.
- **Press Release** – A press release is a formal announcement of your activity or event that is written in the form of a news article. A press release is intended to spark interest and give a reporter a base for writing a story on your event. It can be written and distributed before or after the event.
- **Op-Ed or Letter to the Editor** – An op-ed is an opinion piece that advances an opinion or challenges the reader’s thought. Written by a reader on a topic that is relevant to a newspaper’s audience, op-eds tend to offer a local perspective on a national concern. Op-eds often appear opposite the editorial section, making them widely read.

4. Work the phones and follow-up!

Newspapers and television stations get hundreds of press releases and story ideas every day. Always follow up your media advisories and press releases with telephone calls to pitch your event and gauge interest. Be prepared to answer questions and offer information like photo and interview opportunities that will help reporters craft a story.

- **Print** – It is best to call a newsroom between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., when reporters are likely to be available and not on deadline.
- **Television** – Planning editors generally take calls between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., but not around the noon hour, when they are putting together their mid-day news show. It is best to call the assignment desk after the morning planning meeting, which usually ends between 9:30 and 10:00 a.m. Don't forget to describe the story's visuals when making the pitch.
- **Radio** – The best time to call is early—around 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. After that, the staff goes into planning meetings. You can start calling again after 10:00 a.m. News directors, reporters, and producers are often gone by the afternoon. If a reporter is not able to attend the event, offer to have one of your spokespersons do a taped interview

After the event, follow up with reporters who were interested in your event but did not attend. Call them after the event and offer to send them a press kit and the news release. Do not forget to track your media coverage. Review the stories and interviews to analyze how well your message was delivered.

Tips for pitching:

<p>DO be concise while pitching the story</p> <p>DO assume your event is worth a reporter attending</p> <p>DO be enthusiastic about your event</p> <p>DO be persistent and call back if you do not get in touch with the reporter right away</p> <p>DO ask if the reporter is on deadline and whether it is a good time to talk.</p>	<p>DON'T leave a long phone message; leave your name and number at the beginning and immediately after your brief pitch</p> <p>DON'T call to find out if a fax or e-mail was received</p> <p>DON'T pitch two reporters at the same news outlet at the same time</p> <p>DON'T read a script</p> <p>DON'T argue with a reporter</p> <p>DON'T call during a big news story or at deadline</p> <p>DON'T make up a response to a question you don't know the answer to; tell the reporter you will get back to him or her.</p>
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